



Memorandum

TO: Historic Landmarks Commission

FROM: Courtney Damkroger

SUBJECT: See Below

DATE: February 25, 2002

APPROVED:

DATE:

**SUBJECT: HP01-04-004, CONVERSION OF THE JOHN STOCK AND SONS
WAREHOUSE TO OFFICE USE (HL 92-68) AT BASSETT STREET,
WEST OF TERRAINE STREET**

BACKGROUND

The property owner, Charles Hackett, is proposing to convert the John Stock and Sons Warehouse to office space, on the north side of Bassett Street, approximately 800 feet west of Terraine Street (299A Bassett Street). The historic warehouse would be converted to a total of 5,000 square feet of office space. The developer has provided elevations of proposed exterior changes to the historic building. The 0.11 gross-acre site is zoned IP Industrial Park, and office uses are allowed as of right in that Zoning District. Surrounding land uses are the Union Pacific railroad tracks to the north, industrial uses to the east, office buildings to the south, and a parking structure to the west.

The Design Review Committee of the Commission will meet with the applicants on February 27, 2002. The Historic Landmarks Commission's recommendation on the Historic Preservation Permit will be forwarded to the Director of Planning and the project will be considered at a public hearing by the Director of Planning, tentatively scheduled for March 13, 2002. The Director of Planning will take final action on the Historic Preservation Permit.

HISTORIC RESOURCE DESCRIPTION

The John Stock and Sons Warehouse is a City Landmark (City File #HL92-68) listed on the San Jose Historic Resources Inventory (DPR enclosed). The historical report prepared for the Historic Preservation Permit states that the building is eligible for the California Register of Historic Resources under criteria 1, 2, and 3 and is potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. The Historic Report describes the John Stock Warehouse as follows:



“The historic John Stock and Sons building is an intact example of an unreinforced brick warehouse from the late 1800s. Constructed in 1891 by Jacob Lenzen, a prominent San Jose architect and builder, it has had few modifications and maintains a high level of design integrity. Immediately to the east of the warehouse are two buildings that share a party wall, and are included in the proposed project design but not evaluated in this report.”

The enclosed Historic Report identifies the following character-defining features of the building and recommends that these features be retained and continue to function as the principle design features for the proposed rehabilitation.

- Orientation on the site
- Overall form and massing, including the utilitarian nature of the rectangular plan and the two-story brick walls
- Original exterior materials, including the quality of the brick and pointing, the concrete base, and the simple parapet coping
- Simplicity of the openings in the front façade including the functional configuration of the fenestration and the simplicity of the brick courses above the openings
- Raised front loading dock

Previous changes that may have attained significance in their own right include:

- The billboard-style sign on the rear façade

ANALYSIS

As stated previously, the property owner is proposing to convert the John Stock and Sons Warehouse to office use. Changes to the exterior to accommodate the office use include tension bands to stabilize the unreinforced masonry structure, new windows at the existing openings, and a new door on the front façade, and modification of the existing loading dock to meet ADA access requirements.

The Historic Report analyzed the proposal for compliance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and found the project to be generally in conformance. The report suggests changes to some of the proposed exterior treatments, which are discussed below.

- Front loading dock--proposed for removal to provide ADA accessibility. It is recommended by the preservation consultant that alternatives to its removal be evaluated. An accessible entrance was suggested through the proposed new on-grade exit door if interior separation were provided.

Applicant's Response: "The old loading dock is the only practical means of providing handicap access to the building. The photos clearly show old and patched concrete under the loading dock."

- New doors--such as the addition of the egress door, requires removal or destruction of a small portion of the existing materials, but will not destroy the overall character of these

features. The preservation consultant recommended that a new brick header course be added above the new door to make the opening more consistent with the original openings. In addition, Planning staff recommended that the new brick be distinct from the existing brick.

Applicant's response: "A new brick header will be constructed over the new opening. The new brick will be distinctive from the existing brick."

- Windows—the preservation consultant stated that the proportions of the new windows would be more in keeping with the age of the building if the lines were smaller and more consistent from one window to the next. The proportion of the panes as shown in the upper side window is most appropriate. The simplicity of the window layout is encouraged and the preservation consultant suggested that wood windows would be appropriate for the rehabilitation of this building.

The applicant has not chosen to alter the window layout or proportions. The applicant has indicated that the owner prefers to use aluminum windows, which are more weatherproof than wood windows. Regarding the lintels, the applicant states, "A wood lintel will be used above the former loading dock entrance. The infilled window [above the loading dock entrance] will also contain a wood lintel."

- Tension bands--the preservation consultant stated that the addition of steel tension bands would be visually conspicuous and that alternatives particularly on the front façade are strongly encouraged. In addition, Planning staff recommends that alternatives be explored to prevent covering of the arched brick heading at the loading dock by the proposed tension bands.

The applicant has indicated to the Planning Department that tension bands are the only feasible way of reinforcing the building.

- Mortar—the preservation consultant noted the importance of using mortar that is physically compatible with the soft older brick in the event that repointing is required. The use of a mortar that is too strong for the brick may cause spalling. New pointing that does not match the depth and profile of traditional mortar joints could ruin the appearance of the building. Planning staff has provided the applicant with Preservation Brief #2, Repointing Mortar Joints in Historic Masonry Buildings. A copy is enclosed for commissioners.

Applicant's response: "The building owner would prefer not to repoint the existing brick. If some of the existing brick requires repointing then we will consult with or utilize the accepted methods of repointing."

- Historic signs— proposed plans (page 4A) call for restoration of the historic painted sign at the rear of the building. No plans have been submitted for the treatment of this sign. Planning staff recommends the sign be preserved as is, and the permit conditions reflect this, and that any future plans for its treatment may require an Historic Preservation permit and review by the Historic Landmarks Commission.

- Exterior cleaning—it is the understanding of Planning staff that the applicant does not propose to clean the exterior brick. Should cleaning of the brick be considered in the future it would require an Historic Preservation permit and review by the Historic Landmarks Commission.

On the DPR form, the only description of the neighboring warehouse at 299B Bassett Street is that, “The entrance of the one-story brick building at 299B has a relieving arch with a label molding.” Although it is unclear from the record whether building 299B is included in the City Landmark designation, the applicant is treating building 299B with the same care as the John Stock and Sons warehouse.

Planning staff has requested that more detailed examples of the tension bands, entrance, window and door treatments be provided to the Commission, including photographs and/or samples of proposed materials. Given the satisfactory submission of materials and meeting of the conditions outlined above, the proposed project generally conforms to the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards as most of the character-defining features will be preserved in the reuse of the warehouse as an office building.

RECOMMENDATION

Planning staff recommends that the Historic Landmarks Commission review the project and with the inclusion of the conditions noted above to ensure compliance with the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards, forward comments to the Director of Planning supporting the proposed conversion of the John Stock and Sons Warehouse.

Courtney Damkroger
Historic Preservation Officer

Attachments